

**BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST
LIAISON PANEL MEETING SUMMARY
JANUARY 25, 2007
DOUBLE SPRINGS, ALABAMA**

Liaison Panel Member Attendees

Kevin Holsonback, ADCNR
Ron Eakes, ADCNR
Randy Feltman, Logger
Charles Borden, Landowner, Recreationist
Jim Hughes, Consulting Forester
(Alternate for Bill Snoddy)
Dave Borland, The Nature Conservancy
Vince Meleski, Wild South
Laverne Matheson, Smith Lake Advocacy
Mike Henshaw, Alabama Coop. Extension Service
Mary Lee Ratliff, Recreation
Charles Chandler, Forester
John Terry, Lawrence County Commissioner

FS Attendees

Glen Gaines, District Ranger
Stephanie Love, Silviculturist
Allison Cochran, Wildlife Biologist
Enid Erickson, ORA
Tom Counts, Wildlife Biologist

Additional Attendees

Daryl Lawson, Alabama A&M Univ.
James Burnett, Resident, EMA
Stuart Horn, Wild South
Hank Burns, Wild South
Dwight Lowery, Resident
Bobby Ayers, Resident
Bill Bustin, Retired FS
Ms. Bustin
Mark Kolinski, Wild South
Ted Kuzma, Wild South
Athel Wilhite, Resident
John Creed, Resident (Retired FS)
Matt Smith, Resident
Randy Cambell, Horseback Rider
Terry Mann, Horseback Rider
Ms. Mann
Starlin Blankenship
Ruth Blankenship
Larry Barkey
Mimi Barkey
Mike Bagwell
Joyce Bagwell
Betty Denton, Resident
Jeff Mobley, Attorney

Meeting Agenda

The main objectives of this meeting were: (1) consider and approve new members for the panel; (2) seek agreements on a vision for horseback riding on the Bankhead; (3) hear a report from the Timber/Thinning Working Group; (4) hear a presentation about the Smith Lake Advocacy, Inc. and plans to establish a network of WaterWatch sampling stations; and (5) hear and seek agreement on the issues for Grindstone/Mill/Inman Watersheds and Rockhouse/Hoghouse Watersheds

6:00 Welcome

Glen Gaines
Bankhead, USFS

- 6:15 Proposed New Members Glen Gaines
- Local Residents - Vacant Position
Laverne Masterson, Smith Lake Advacacy, Inc.
- Professional Forester - New Position
Charles Chandler and Jimmy Murphy, Consulting Foresters
- Local Government - County Commissions - Standing Positions
Jerry Mobley, Chairman; Winston County
Roger Hayes, District II and **Tommy Farmer**, District I, Winston County
Harold Lou Allen, District IV and **John Terry**, District II, Lawrence Co.
- Threatened and Endangered Species - Standing Position
Dan Everson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- 6:45 2007 Renew Our Rivers Project - Winston County Laverne Masterson
Smith Lake Advacacy
- 7:15 The Future of Horseback Riding on the Bankhead Glen Gaines
-Proposed Guiding Principles
- 7:35 Timber/Thinning Working Group Report Vince Meleski
Mike Henshaw
Randy Feltman
Dave Boreland
- 7:55 Preliminary Issues - Watershed Forest Health and Stephanie Love
Bankhead, USFS
Restoration Planning
- 8:20 Closeout and Schedule Next Meeting Glen Gaines

CONSIDERATION OF NEW PANEL MEMBERS

Professional Forester - New Position

Charles Chandler, Cullman, Alabama, was introduced and he provided some background history of himself. Charles has a range of experience as a consulting forester and is currently with Industree Timber as a procurement forester.

Jimmy Murphy was not present at the meeting for consideration.

Local Resident/Property Owner – Vacant

Laverne Masterson, of Crane Hill, Alabama was introduced and he provided some background history of himself. Laverne is establishing Smith Lake Advocacy, Inc. a nonprofit organization made up of homeowners and others who are dedicated to having a clean Smith Lake.

New County Commissioners

Winston County - **Roger Hayes**, District II and **Tommy Farmer**, District I,
Lawrence County - **Harold Lou Allen**, District IV and **John Terry**, District II

New U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Section 7 Employee

Dan Everson, Wildlife Biologist

The panel approved through a show of hands the addition of Mr. Matheson and Mr. Chandler to the panel. The county commissioners and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have standing positions on the panel and were not voted on.

SMITH LAKE ADVOCACY, INC.

Laverne Matheson provided an overview of the newly formed Smith Lake Advocacy, Inc. The group of Winston County home and property owners dedicated to ensuring clean water on Smith Lake. The group is involved with Smith Lake cleanup as part of the "Renew Our Rivers" campaign and the Alabama Water Watch. There will be a Smith Lake cleanup in Winston County on June 19-23, 2007. Volunteers are being recruited to be part of the Alabama Water Watch. The Forest Service would like to have some of these sampling stations on Sipsey, Brushy, and some of their tributaries to monitor water quality coming out of the Bankhead National Forest. These waters are important to the recovery of threatened and endangered aquatic species, as well as the quality of water in Smith Lake.

THE VISION FOR HORSEBACK RIDING ON THE BANKHEAD

Glen Gaines presented proposed vision and other options considered. The panel and the attending public voiced a preference for the proposed vision & guiding principles.

PREFEREED VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**Future Development
to Support Horseback
Riding on the Bankhead
National Forest**

**Proposed Vision and
Guiding
Principles for Development**

**Vision for Horseback Riding
on the Bankhead**

- Equestrian Use Will Integrate Well With Other Dispersed and Trail-Based Recreation Activities
- The Use Does Not Conflict With Forest Health & Restoration Goals or With the Recovery of Threatened and Endangered Species
- Development Will Take Place Within the Capability to Maintain Improvements to Standard Over the Long-Term

Vision for Horseback Riding on the Bankhead

- Provide Capability for Moderate Use Through a System of Trails/Road Routes Totaling 75-100 Miles
- Provide Trails That Are Safe and Facilities That are Healthy and Clean
- The Bankhead Will Primarily Serve Local/Regional Equestrians Living Within 100 miles

Guiding Principles to Meet The Vision

- Gradually Meet Local Needs for Improved Camping Facilities
 - Provide 40 to 50 Designated Camping Sites in Two Loops (Similar to the Brushy Lake Campground Standard)
 - Construct a New Bathhouse Facility
 - Construct a Pavilion

Guiding Principles to Meet the Vision

- Expand Riding Opportunities with Previously Designated Riding Routes (Trails will include Some FS Roads Currently Closed to Horseback Riding)
- Implement Planned Trail Re-Routes and Establish Seasonal Closures on Portions of Existing Trails for Improved Safety and Trail Maintenance

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Options Considered

1. A Major Destination Point for Horseback Riding in the Southeast – Greatly Expanded Use and High Development of Facilities and Trails
2. Current Facilities Maintained to Provide for Local Users – No Expansion of Current Use, Facilities, or Trails
3. Provide Facilities and Trails to Meet Demands from Local and Nearby Users – Include Horse Camp Improvements and Expanded Riding Routes

A Major Horseback Riding Destination – Option 1

- Increase Campground Capacity to 75-100 Camping Sites
- Provide Full Electrical, Water, and Sewer Hookups; Pave Roads to Camping Facility
- Increase Fees for Added Operational Costs /Concession
- Increase Trail Capacity from 55 Miles to 150 - 200 Miles and Increase Trail Access Points (Such as Trailheads)
- Focus on Horseback Riding as the Primary Recreational Activity on the Bankhead NF

Support Current Levels of Horseback Riding – Option 2

- Maintain Owl Creek as a Primitive Campground with Access to Running Water and One SST
- Provide 55 Total Miles of Trails for Equestrian Use on the Bankhead and Maintain Six Trailheads

TIMBER/THINNING WORKING GROUP REPORT

Vince Meleski reported on the work groups recent work. The work group conducted a field review on January 22, 2007. Below are notes that reference photos Vince presented at the meeting.

Comp 163 St 26

2 - AL 195 Thinning review. This site is the best timber sale viewed to date. Minimal damage to leave trees. Slash spread uniformly and thinly over the site Access roads seeded successfully.

9 - Picture of seeded access road.

Comp 148 St 10

11 - AL 195 Obryan's longleaf site. This picture shows the deck area with warm season grasses growing. On a previous audit, there was a bare area in the deck on a slope to a skid trail, this was eroding where grass had not taken. The slash on the skid trail had stopped the sediment.

12 - Thinned area This site had been burned in April 2005 and will be burned with a growing season burn this spring. Grasses are establishing. There were several dead standing trees of various species. This indicates that they were not fire dependant.

Comp 132 St 17

This was a 2006 active bug spot that had been treated with cut and remove all pines. There were a few dead pines outside the cleared area. This will bear watching to see if these trees allow the spot to expand.

Comp 43 St 6

28 - This site is off Pine Torch Road and crosses a horse trail. It had been thinned and burned. This picture is from the horse trail showing little effect on the trail. This is one of the AL A&M research plots.

32 - A skid trail - well covered with slash.

33 - The log deck. - well covered with slash.

Comp 52 St 36

This stand along AL Hwy 33 was reported to have had most hardwoods removed. We visited and determined that this was true. Skid trails had very heavy layers of the downed small hardwoods. Very few small hardwoods remained. A high percentage of the leave trees in the stand were damaged.

2161 - Hardwoods on a skidder trail.

2162 - Hardwoods on a skidder trail.

2166 - Severely damaged tree.

2175 - Thinned with only loblolly pines left. This essentially removed a generation of hardwoods for this DFC hardwood site.

After visiting the site the Forest Service developed plans to keep such an event from occurring again. Future actions will include:

- Use this sale as a training tool for USFS employees as to how not to do a timber sale.
- Review, with the logger in contract review, the goals of restoration and that small hardwoods are to be left.
- The Forest Service will mark hardwoods and dogwoods when they mark leave trees on future timber sales. This could actually aid conversion to hardwood by marking desired species.
- Follow up performance on timber sales more closely, with particular attention to new contractors.

Hank and I checked five other sites that had been thinned recently and the T&T team checked 2 more. One with minor problems was found and the other sites were acceptable.

Collaboration Conference

It was sponsored by American Lands Alliance in November in Portland OR. 60 grassroots forest protection organizations were present. I was on a panel for successful collaborations with the USFS. The Bankhead was the only full forest collaborative process. After two days of discussion our process was determined to be the most successful collaborative process in the US. Most of the other groups were having problems working with the collaborative process with the USFS and area stakeholders.

ISSUES FOR 2007 WATERSHED FOREST HEALTH AND RESTORATION PLANNING

Stephanie Love, Silviculturist on the Bankhead National Forest, provided update and issues identified for the Grindstone/Mill and Inman Watersheds and the Hoghouse/Rockhouse Watersheds. The formal public scoping period for proposed projects in these watersheds just recently ended. There were no significant issues identified from comments received during the scoping period. The Forest Service identified a list of significant issues on which to develop alternatives for analysis. These issues were:

- Rate of Restoration of the Desired Native Forest Communities
- Use of Herbicides to selectively treat vegetation during site preparation or in the release of seedlings of the desired tree species
- Construction of a new road in the Hoghouse/Rockhouse Watershed Project
- Allocation of the Canyon Prescription
- Increase Areas of Woodland Restoration (as compared to DFC in the Forest Health/Restoration EIS)
- Road Closures

The group agreed to this list of issues and no additional issues were brought forward by the public.

INTRODUCING PROPOSAL FOR UNDER PLANTING LONGLEAF IN JAILHOUSE LOBLOLLY

A proposal was introduced to under-plant a 30 acre loblolly stand (compartment 153, std. 1) with longleaf pine. This stand has had a mid-story treatment, growing season prescribed burn, and treatment of invasive species. The stand has an open, woodland structure currently. The area is proposed for planting in this winter.

A question was asked regarding the tree spacing to be used for planting. Stephanie said the spacing would probably be on a 9X9 or 10x10 foot spacing. There was some concern about having a uniform spacing across the stand, with a preference for a patchier longleaf seedling pattern. This will be considered when planting this stand.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Bankhead Liaison Panel will be held Thursday, April 26, 2007 in Moulton, Alabama. A special working meeting to review and discuss alternatives for the watershed environmental assessment may be called in February or March.